

of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Michigan (Ms. STABENOW) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. Speaker, on April 12, I led an hour of debate on the topic of prescription drug coverage for senior citizens. I read three letters from around the state from seniors who shared their personal stories. On the 12th, I made a commitment to continue to read a different letter every week until the House enacts reform. This week I will read a letter from Julia Kanopsky of Livonia Michigan.

In conjunction with Mother's Day, the Older Women's League (OWL) published a report entitled, "Prescription for Change: Why women need a Medicare Drug Benefit." The report describes the special problems older women face in obtaining prescriptions.

More than one in three women on Medicare lack prescription drug coverage.

In 1997, 2.6 million women on Medicare spent more than \$1200 a year on their medications and another 2.4 million women spent between \$612 and \$1200 a year on pharmaceuticals therapies.

The high costs of prescription drugs are especially hard on older women, most of whom live on fixed incomes. More than half of women age 65 and over have personal annual incomes of less than \$10,000 a year and three out of four have incomes under \$15,000.

On average, women's overall out-of-pocket spending for prescription drugs is higher than their male counterparts. In 1999, women on Medicare were projected to spend \$430 a year on medications, compared to \$380 for men.

Women are expected to make up a greater share (58 percent) of beneficiaries with high (\$500–\$999) or very high (\$1,000) annual out-of-pocket drug costs in 1999.

Women make up more than six in ten (61.4 percent) Medicare beneficiaries with hypertension and women with hypertension have higher overall out-of-pocket spending for prescription drugs (\$800) than men do (\$694).

OWL shares the disturbing fact that Medicare beneficiaries without drug coverage are less likely to receive drug therapies compared to those with coverage. In 1996, women without coverage used 24 percent fewer prescriptions than did women with coverage.

I agree with the conclusions in the OWL report that these numbers cry out for the inclusion of a prescription drug benefit in Medicare.

I will now read the letter from Julia Kanopsky:

I was so thrilled to find your address I was allowed to express myself on [the] high price of prescriptions. I am one of the least fortunate ones who does not have any . . . health care . . . [I have a] pension [and] when I pay for my three prescriptions for heart and blood pressure, and 2 for pain, pay for my Blue Cross, half of my check is used up and every time you get a refill on prescription drugs, the price differs. Blue Cross [also] goes up. I [have] talked to so many seniors like myself and it has us worried to death. I just wish the government would take an interest in different problems like this, to curb

like prices. I eat two meals a day . . . any more hike in health cost, I'll have to go to one meal. [I get] a little Social Security raise, and then . . . property tax and utilities go up. I just can't win. Voice your opinion, Debbie! Maybe someone will listen. Thank you, Julia Kanopsky. P.S. I'm too old to get a job if I were younger, maybe [I would]. I could pick up a job to at least pay for prescriptions for Healthcare. I'm trying to maintain my home and being independent, these prices are scaring me.

The time is now to enact legislation that will reduce the price for prescription drugs for seniors and that will include a prescription drug benefit in the Medicare program.

HOUSE BIPARTISAN VOTE ON THE ESTATE TAX IS A VICTORY FOR TAXPAYERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. FOLEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. FOLEY. Mr. Speaker, as a member of the Committee on Ways and Means, I want to celebrate today's victory on behalf of the taxpayers. That is the outstanding vote produced by this bipartisan Congress, 279 to 136. Sixty-five Democrats joined the Republican majority in signalling to America and to taxpayers everywhere that we think it is punitive when a person dies after working all their life to increase wealth, to increase opportunities for their family, that the government now becomes their partner; the government becomes, if you will, the primary recipient of all that person's hard work.

Growing up in this country, my parents told me, work hard, strive for the greatest heights, and you will be richly rewarded for your efforts. America, home of entrepreneurs and opportunity everywhere, signals to people, come one, come all, from around the world to this great Nation. We are in fact a home of opportunity.

Many people agreed with us today, and thankfully many people, everyone from the gentleman from Hawaii (Mr. ABERCROMBIE) to the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. WYNN), joined. The list is endless of people from virtually every State who joined in recognizing the egregious nature of the estate tax or death tax, as we call it.

The calls on the House floor, today, though would indicate otherwise. In fact, the minority portrayed this as simply a Republican bill rammed through this process with no debate and no consideration. Death taxes have been on the books since 1913, so I do not think we got to this point in time quickly. In fact, I think we have been waiting for this a long time.

I think the voters of the minority Democrat party in fact enjoyed the bill today and supported the bill today, and in fact, we are just within the threshold of a veto-proof number in this Chamber.

While we are on the subject of bipartisanship, I think it is important to

not only compliment those, and the numbers and names can be found probably in many newspapers around the country, the 65 brave hearts that stood up and recognized the estate tax is patently unfair. But let us talk about the tactics being used by the minority party this week in fact as it relates to getting bills passed on behalf of the citizens of the country.

The front page of the Roll Call newspaper on the Hill said, "Wyden Lands in Hot Water." That is Senator WYDEN, a Democrat from Oregon. "Bipartisanship may cost the Oregonian a finance panel seat."

It goes on to say that, "Senator Ron Wyden may have won plaudits from the New York Times editorial page for trying to reach across party lines to craft a Medicare prescription drug reform plan, but the move infuriated many of his Democratic colleagues. Several Democrat sources says Wyden has now dashed any hope of landing one of the three coveted seats opening at the end of the year on the powerful Finance Committee, which has jurisdiction over entitlement and tax policy."

That is amazing, that in a day when we have had dialogue about a lack of bipartisanship, we read that headline, that one of their own reached out to the gentleman from California (Mr. THOMAS), the chairman of the Subcommittee on Health of the Committee on Ways and Means, to try and craft a proposal that would actually pass, that would actually ensure prescription drug coverage for our seniors, prescription drug coverage that is vitally necessary for our seniors throughout America.

A brave soul, a Democratic Senator, decided it was more important to start to reach out to help our constituents, rather than score political points.

It goes on to talk about how he gave Republicans ground to stand on, and what have you. Let me just suggest, Mr. Speaker, the problems we are facing in this country are great. The problems we are facing as it relates to policy are important. I applaud Senator WYDEN, and I know I am probably stretching by referring to people by name, but I want to thank him for at least reaching out to try and find some common ground.

We have a lot of issues. The Patients' Bill of Rights, I will alert many of my colleagues as a Republican, I am a proud sponsor and supporter of that bill. That does not bring my party any great happiness, because they don't like when some of us are off the reservation, but nevertheless, I support it. Campaign finance reform is another issue I take a great deal of pride in supporting.

I think there are a number of issues we can resolve on this floor, in this Chamber, relative to the needs of Americans. But I do think it is good that this is a time when bipartisanship

is finally starting to reach through the cacaphony, right now, again, 65 Democratic yea votes on the bill today to eliminate death taxes, and that now maybe we can move on to other important aspects of public policy.

Let us go ahead and try to bring the Patients' Bill of Rights to fruition. Let us try and bring prescription drug coverage to fruition. Let us meet on the educational needs of our children around America, rather than just talk about it for campaign purposes. Let us make certain that every American is benefited by the debate and the dialogue here on the floor, that ultimately it is not about who runs this place.

God forbid we have that kind of fight. Let us not worry about who is in charge next year. Let us do something on behalf of the people. We have a chance. We can do it.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair would remind all Members to refrain from personal references to individual Senators.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF TODAY'S VOTE ON THE ESTATE TAX

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, might I take just a moment to add my appreciation and congratulations to this first class of Pages of the millennium. Clearly, the eloquence of the words said by my colleagues cannot be matched in the short period of time that I have to simply say thank you, thank you, thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciated hearing the words of my colleague, and enjoyed the fact that we have the opportunity to work on a number of issues together. I truly believe that when we debate an important issue that has gotten the attention of the American people, it is important to come forward and tell the truth.

I campaigned and worked with constituents around my district on the issue of allowing them to retain the hard-earned dollars that they have worked for in their family farms and their small businesses. My district is an urban district, so I do not have that many small farms, but I have those beneficiaries who have small farms of their relatives in rural areas of Texas.

So I likewise am concerned about those who would want to benefit from this Nation's recognizing their hard-earned dollars.

I think that today's debate did not fully tell the truth. Death is final, and the suggestion that what we voted on today, the repeal of death taxes, is final is really untrue. It is untrue be-

cause unlike the suggestion that we have done this in a bipartisan manner, we have not. This bill that was passed today is destined to be vetoed by the President of the United States.

Legislation only passes when this House passes it, when the Senate passes it, and when it goes to the President's desk.

Many of us wanted to join in bipartisan legislation, but it was not to be heard of by the Republican majority. It seems that there was an effort to really play to the headlines the repeal of death taxes.

But really, under current law, there is a \$1.3 million exclusion from the estate tax for interest in farms and closely-held business. Did they not tell us that the substitute that was offered, that I did vote for, that would be supported by the President of the United States and the Senate, gave a \$4 million exclusion per family for farms and closely-held businesses?

I wanted to be sure that this would pass both Houses and be signed by the President of the United States, so I did not just take my impressions to the floor of the House when I voted, I spoke to the Secretary of the Treasury, representing the administration, and the Deputy Secretary of the Treasury, representing the administration. They fully appreciate the back-end balloon of burden that we will have with this bill that was passed today.

Deputy Secretary Eisenstadt said the administration is committed to passing relief on death taxes for closely-held businesses and, as well, family farms. The legislation that the President will sign, that will go into law, was the vote that I made today to support the legislation that would give a \$4 million benefit to those closely-held businesses and family farms.

In fact, the substitute would provide a credit of \$1.1 million right now, and in 2006 have a further increase of \$1.2 million.

Interestingly enough, Mr. Speaker, the repeal that the Republicans are talking about has to be phased in, whereas the vote that I made today, the \$1.1 million exclusion, is effective in 2001.

It is important to tell Americans the truth, and the fact that we take \$28.5 billion in estate taxes now, over 5 years a repeal will result in \$104 billion being taken out of the government's revenue source. That money will come just at the time that the baby boomers will be reaching the age of depending on social security, and how will we make the choice of the amount of money that we lose from the estate taxes and not being able to pay social security?

Sometimes it sounds like a cycle that is being said over and over again, but the government does have its responsibilities. I am certainly someone who applauds the strength of the economy right now. I applaud that so many

Americans have found their way to the Dow Jones and NASDAQ, but as we look at Wall Street, may I also suggest to those who are investing that we have watched the roller coaster go up and down and up and down.

That means that the government still has its responsibility to deal with social security.

Might I close, Mr. Speaker, to simply say that if anybody thinks that what we did was to help the bulk of the American people, this is the pie documented by the Joint Committee on Taxation and Treasury, and that pie says that for non-taxable estates that will be impacted by this bill today, it is 98 percent that will not be impacted.

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Only 2 percent of those businesses and family farms, if even that, will be impacted. The Democratic alternative responds to all of those who need relief.

In Texas, there would only be 1,900 businesses that would even be impacted. Why not give a responsible relief? And the Democratic alternative will be turned into law; this only creates headlines today. I am not willing to vote for headlines. I want to vote for Americans.

SWEET NEWS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SIMPSON). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MILLER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I have sweet news. The General Accounting Office just released a report today on the United States Sugar Program. This is an update of the 1993 report, and the report says that the United States program supporting sugar prices increases user costs while benefiting producers.

The bottom line in this 100-page document is that the sugar program in the United States costs the American consumer, the American economy, \$2 billion a year. \$2 billion a year.

Mr. Speaker, this is the General Accounting Office. This is the independent, nonpartisan office here in Washington that works for Congress. The head of the agency has got a 15-year term. So there is no partisanship in this. This report was requested by Senator DIANE FEINSTEIN, the Democrat from California, the gentleman from California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER), Democrat, and myself, a Republican from Florida.

This is not a biased report coming from the Agriculture Department or the sugar growers, but the most authoritative source; and it shows that the sugar program costs \$2 billion a year. The sugar program is bad for consumers, bad for the environment, and bad for jobs in this country.

Mr. Speaker, let me briefly explain what the program is first. The program